ROUTE 6

CHELTENHAM-OGONTZ TO OLNEY TRANSPORTATION CENTER

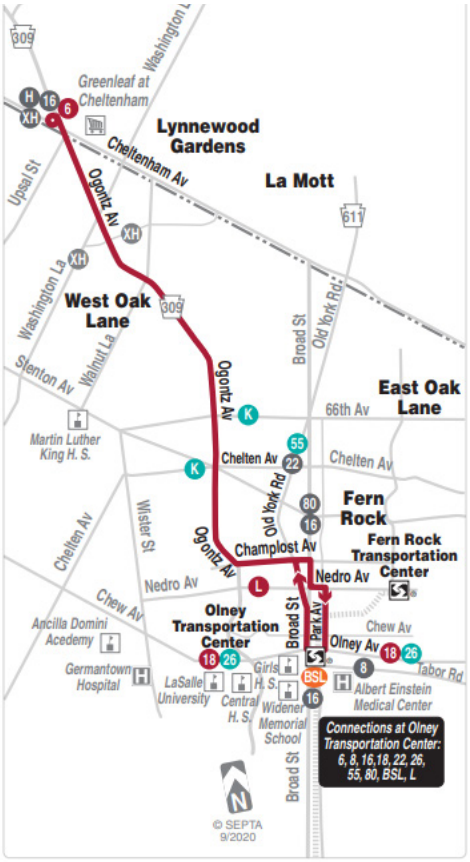
KEY SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

- *Route 6 travels between Olney Transportation Center and the Cheltenham Ogontz Loop via Ogontz Avenue, connecting the West Oak Lane neighborhood with the Broad Street Line and other SEPTA bus routes.*
- *Route 6's alignment is relatively direct and simple. It operates frequent service all day on weekdays. It carried nearly 5,800 riders per day in Fall 2019 and is SEPTA's top route in terms of riders per hour.*
- *Opportunities to improve Route 6 are centered around improving service speeds and frequencies.*

ROUTE OVERVIEW

Route 6 operates between the Cheltenham-Ogontz Loop and the Olney Transportation Center (OTC). The route provides local connections along Ogontz Avenue within West Oak Lane , connecting riders to Greenleaf at Cheltenham Mall and the Olney Transportation Center.

Figure 1 | Route Map



SERVICE OVERVIEW

Schedule

Route 6 operates 24 hours a day seven days per week (see Table 1). On weekdays:

- Peak period service frequencies average every eight minutes
- Midday average frequencies are 11 minutes.
- In the evening, service frequencies averaged 14 minutes, while late night frequencies average 21 minutes.

On Saturdays, service frequencies average 17 minutes during the day and 29 minutes at night. On Sundays, frequencies average 21 minutes during the day and 34 minutes at night. Actual frequencies vary during all time periods.

Table 1 | Schedule Statistics

Service Day	Span Of Service	Frequency (Range)	Frequency (Average)
Weekdays	4:37 AM to 2:26 AM		
Early AM	4:37 AM - 5:59 AM	12 - 60	39
AM Peak	6:00 AM - 8:59 AM	7 - 13	8
Midday	9:00 AM - 2:59 PM	7 - 13	11
PM Peak	3:00 PM - 5:59 PM	7 - 12	8
Evening	6:00 PM - 9:59 PM	8 - 22	14
Late Night	10:00 PM - 11:59 PM	18 - 24	21
Owl	12:00 AM – 2:26 AM	21 - 60	39
Saturdays	5:01 AM to 2:26 AM		
Day	8:00 AM - 5:59 PM	15 - 21	17
Night	6:00 PM - 7:59 AM	14 - 60	29
Sundays	5:31 AM to 2:26 AM		
Day	8:00 AM - 5:59 PM	20 - 30	21
Night	6:00 PM - 7:59 AM	20 - 60	34

Note: Span of service reflects the time the first bus begins service until the time the last bus finishes service.

Service Patterns

Route 6 operates six service patterns: four used on southbound trips and two used on northbound trips (see Table 2).

In both directions, there are two essentially identical primary patterns. The difference between these two patterns is that one is a headway-based version of the route, and the other is timepoint based (Figure 1). In addition, during late night service, some Route 6 southbound trips terminate just outside of Olney Transportation Center on Broad Street at Olney Avenue. This change does not affect passengers.

Table 2 | Service Patterns

Pattern	Origin	Destination	Unique Feature	Unique Stops	Trips Per Day		
					Wkd	Sat	Sun
Southbound							
229727	Cheltenham Av & Ogontz Av Loop	Olney Transportation Center	Primary Pattern		69	0	0
229729	Cheltenham Av & Ogontz Av Loop	Olney Transportation Center	Primary Pattern	1	31	60	49
229726	Cheltenham Av & Ogontz Av Loop	Broad St & Olney Av	Short-turn	1	6	0	0
229728	Cheltenham Av & Ogontz Av Loop	Broad St & Olney Av	Short-turn	2	2	5	5

Northbound							
229730	Olney Transportation Center	Cheltenham Av & Ogontz Av	Primary Pattern		77	0	0
229731	Olney Transportation Center	Cheltenham Av & Ogontz Av Loop	Primary Pattern	1	33	67	56

Note: Unique stops are those not served by the primary pattern

RIDERSHIP

In Fall 2019, Route 6 carried 5,773 passengers on weekdays, 2,662 on Saturdays, and 2,351 on Sundays (see Table 3). Route 6's high ridership and short length made it very productive; it ranked first or second in terms of riders per revenue vehicle hour on all service days.

Table 3 | Fall 2019 Ridership and Productivity

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays
Daily Ridership	**5,773**	**2,662**	**2,351**
Rank	32	38	31
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Hour	**87.9**	**69.0**	**76.0**
Rank	1	2	1

Transfer Patterns

Nearly half of Route 6 trips involve a transfer to or from the Broad Street Line, and some trips also involve a transfer from the Broad Street Line to the Market Frankford Line. The highest transfer rates on Route 6 are to and from:

- The Broad Street Line (41.6% of all trips)
- Market Frankford Line (6.9%)
- Route K Ridge-Midvale to Arrott Transportation Center (3.5%)
- Route 18 Fox Chase to Cedarbrook Plaza (3.2%)
- Route 26 Frankford Transportation Center to Chelten Av Station (3.1%)

Weekend transfer patterns are similar but slightly lower.

Ridership by Stop

While the highest ridership stops on Route 6 are the Olney Transportation Center and the Cheltenham-Ogontz Loop, ridership is dispersed along the route with several high ridership stops along Ogontz Avenue (see Figure 2). High ridership stops on northbound trips include:

- 2,262 riders board at the Olney Transportation Center (36.6% of all riders)
- 62 riders board and 222 alight at Ogontz Avenue and Limekiln Parkway (4.6%)
- 96 riders board and 214 alight at Ogontz Avenue and 65th Avenue (5.0%)
- 37 riders board and 184 alight at Ogontz Avenue and 71st Avenue (3.6%)
- 55 riders board and 235 alight at Ogontz Avenue and 72nd Avenue (4.7%)

- 625 riders alight at the Cheltenham-Ogontz Loop (10.1%)

Figure 2 | Weekday Northbound Ridership by Stop: Fall 2019 Southbound

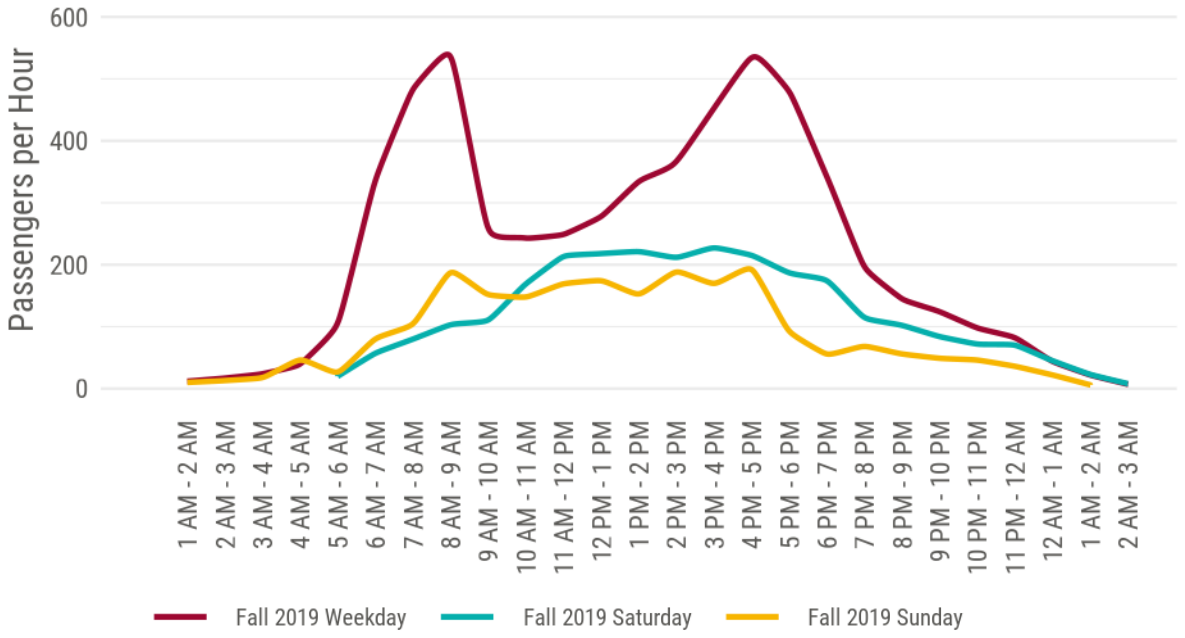
Ridership by Time of Day

Ridership by Hour

Fall 2019 weekday ridership was peaked with more than 500 riders per hour in the AM and PM peaks (Figure 3). Midday ridership, on a per hour basis, was half as high as peak period ridership. Ridership begins increasing from midday levels at 2 PM, indicating that the route is popular among students. Ridership decreased quickly after 6:00 PM and by 7:00 PM ridership decreased to about 200 riders per hour. Ridership continued to decrease into the evening and early morning.

Saturday and Sunday ridership did not exhibit peaks and gradually increased through early-afternoon and then gradually decreased. Sunday ridership increased more quickly, but Saturday had higher levels of ridership overall. Notably, on a ridership by hour basis, Saturday midday ridership was nearly as high as weekday midday ridership.

Figure 3 | Ridership by Hour: Pre-Pandemic: Fall 2019



Ridership and Maximum Loads by Trip

Weekday ridership per trip underscores strong peak-period demand. Trips headed southbound carry more riders in the morning and afternoon ridership is higher on northbound trips (Figure 4):

- During the AM peak, most trips carry between 20 and 40 total passengers, and a few trips carried close to 50 passengers. As discussed, ridership was higher on southbound trips as compared to northbound trips.
- During the midday, most trips carried between 20 and 30 riders. Ridership was balanced in the north and southbound directions.
- The PM peak had the highest ridership per trip. Most trips carried between 30 and 56 riders. One trip had more than 50 riders. Ridership was stronger on northbound trips as compared with southbound.
- Evening trips carried between 10 and 25 riders, with ridership per dropping into the evening and early morning.

Turnover on the route and the use of articulated vehicles means that maximum loads are lower than total ridership, and all trips operate below seated capacity (see Figure 5).

Ridership during weekend days was consistent. Most Saturday trips carried around 20 passengers with of the exception of some higher ridership trips during the late night and early morning. Most Sunday trips carried around 20 riders, although there were several trips where demand increased to between 30 and 40 riders per trip. No trips exceeded seated capacity.

Figure 4 | Weekday Ridership by Trip

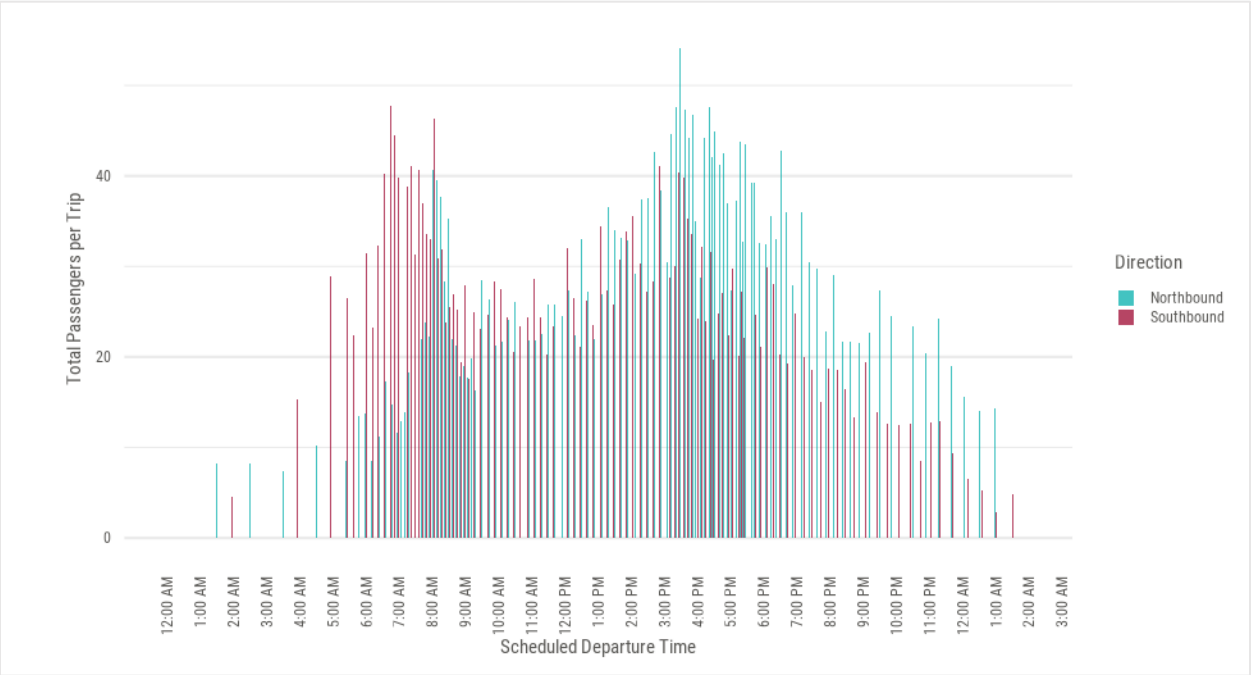
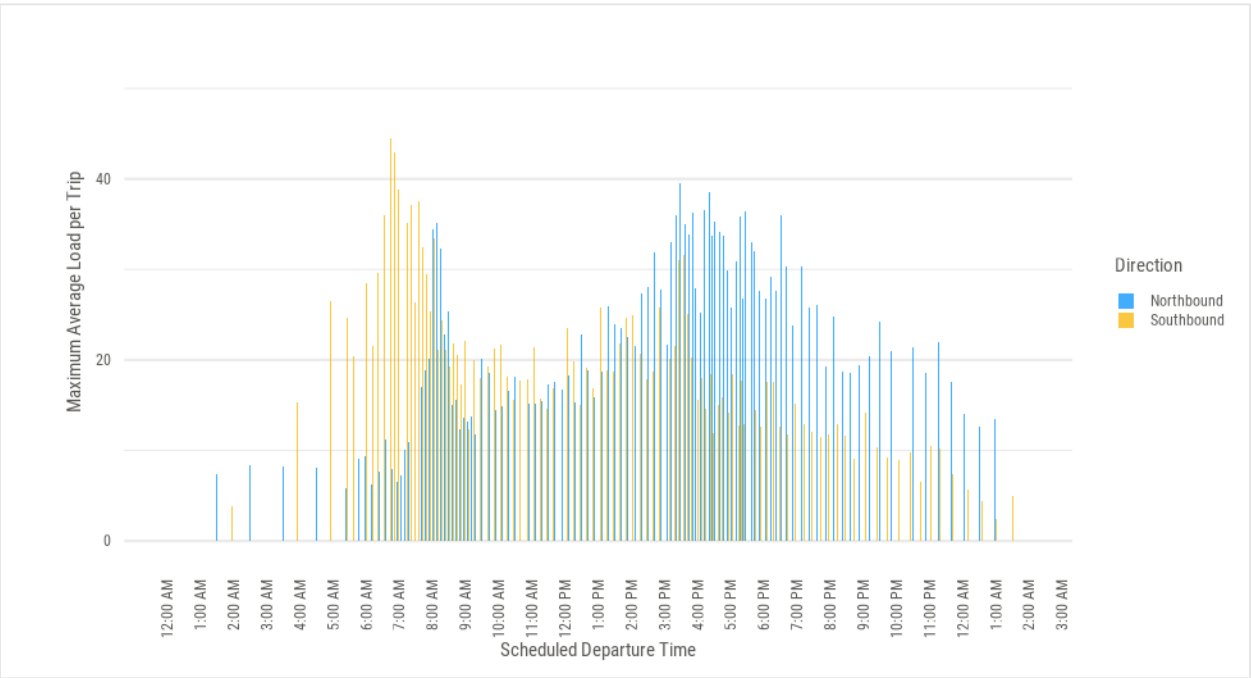


Figure 5 | Weekday Maximum Loads by Trip



ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

On-Time Performance

In Fall 2019, Route 6's on-time performance was 86.4% on weekdays, 89.3% on Saturdays, and 92.2% on Sundays (see Table 4), with off-schedule performance typically due to late service, specifically on weekdays.

Table 4 | On-Time Performance

	Early (>2 Mins Early)	On Time (<2 Mins Early to 6 Mins Late)	Late (>6 Mins Late))	Missed Trips
Goal		**80%**		
Fall 2019 Actual				
Weekday	3.2%	86.4%	10.4%	5.2%
Saturday	4.6%	89.3%	6.1%	3.5%
Sunday	5.1%	92.2%	2.7%	2.9%

Note: On-time percentages are for trips that are run (do not include dropped trips)

AVERAGE SPEEDS AND STOP SPACING

Route 6 has slow operating speeds with PM peak period speeds averaging less than 8 mph along the entire length of the route (see Figure 6). Stops are also closely spaced over the length of Route 6, with an average stop spacing of 8 to 10 stops per mile (see Figure 7).

Figure 6 | Average Speeds: PM Peak Northbound

Figure 7| Stop Spacing by Route Segment

RIDER CHARACTERISTICS

Route 6's service area shares some characteristics with SEPTA's service area (see Table 5) but serves fewer White riders and significantly more Black riders.

Table 5 | Rider Characteristics

	Route 6 Riders	Systemwide Average
Median Household Income	$29,170	$32,713
Share in Poverty	29%	30%
Ethnicity		
White	13%	38%
Black	80%	46%
Hispanic	5%	10%

Other	2%	7%
Without a Vehicle	40%	37%
Seniors	17%	15%
With a Disability	2%	2%

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities to strengthen Route 6 are listed below. Some suggestions may be contradictory, as there is usually more than one approach to improving a route.

- **Make Service Faster:** The most important improvements for Route 6 will be to make it faster and more reliable: The two primary ways improved speed and reliability could be accomplished include:
    - **Prioritize Route 6 for Transit Priority and Additional Measures:** A more modest approach than Rapid Bus would be to focus on infrastructure improvements that would make service faster and more reliable. Again, these would require a partnership between SEPTA and the city:
        - Queue jump lanes
        - Transit signal priority
        - “Bus bulbs” and level platform boardings that eliminate the need for buses pull in and out of stops
    - **Consolidate Stops:** One major reason that Route 6 is slow is that it has an average of nearly eight to ten stops per mile and nine per mile in some areas. The consolidation of stops to one every other block would speed service and no riders would need to walk more than an additional half block.
- **Move End to Fern Rock Transportation Center:** Given crowded conditions at the Olney Transportation Center, there may be room to end Route 6 at the Fern Rock Transportation Center. While Fern Rock also has limited capacity, there may be opportunities to improve station design to accommodate more bus services.
- **Operate Frequent Service on Saturdays and Sundays:** Route 6 carries nearly as many passengers per hour during the day on Saturdays and Sundays as on weekdays midday. Currently, Route 6 operates every 15-21 minutes on Saturdays and every 20-30 minutes on Sundays. Route 6 could support service every 15 minutes during the day on Saturdays and Sundays. Increasing frequencies would make service more convenient for passengers.